

Message Text

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FM AMEMBASSY LONDON

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4926

INFO USMISSION NATO BRUSSELS

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S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 02 LONDON 12157

E.O. 11652: XGDS-1

TAGS: MARR, MCAP, US, UK, NATO

SUBJECT: BURDENSARING

REF: USNATO 4980

1. AMBASSADOR RUMSFELD'S TELEGRAM SUCCINCTLY STATES THE BRITISH POSITION ON BURDENSARING. ELABORATION OF HMG'S VIEWS ON THIS IMPORTANT ISSUE MAY BE USEFUL IN CONSIDERING WHAT CAN BE DONE TO PROMOTE US OBJECTIVES.

2. HMG BELIEVES FIRMLY THAT AN ADEQUATE US MILITARY PRESENCE IN EUROPE IS INDISPENSABLE TO A CREDIBLE ALLIANCE DEFENSE POSTURE; ACCEPTS BURDENSARING IN PRINCIPLE, AND FULLY ENDORSES THE PRINCIPLE THAT THE EUROPEANS SHOULD DEMONSTRATE TANGIBLY THEIR SUPPORT OF COMMON DEFENSE PRECEPTS. AT THE SAME TIME THE BRITISH VIEW THEIR OWN FINANCIAL AND ECONOMIC SITUATION AS VASTLY DIFFERENT FROM THAT OF THE FEDERAL REPUBLIC OF GERMANY (WHOSE REGULAR AND MOUNTING TRADE SURPLUSES CONTRAST SHARPLY WITH CURRENT UK DEFICITS), AND THEY CONSIDER THAT THEIR MILITARY BALANCE OF PAYMENTS SITUATION IS FAR MORE SERIOUS IN RELATIVE TERMS THAN OUR OWN. THE UK/FRG OFF-

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SET ARRANGEMENTS ARE NOT NEARLY AS SATISFACTORY IN

BRITISH VIEW AS THOSE WE HAVE NEGOTIATED WITH THE GERMANS. FURTHER, THE BRITISH EXPECT THEIR RELATIVE POSITION TO WEAKEN WHEREAS THAT OF THE UNITED STATES SHOWS EVERY SIGN OF EARLY IMPROVEMENT.

3. DOMESTICALLY THE CONSERVATIVE GOVERNMENT IS IN TROUBLE. ITS ANTI-INFLATIONARY POLICIES HAVE NOT YET ARRESTED RISING PRICES, AND PLANS FOR PHASE III MAY HAVE TO BE REVISED IN THE LIGHT OF THE PROSPECTIVE INCREASE IN THE PRICE OF OIL FROM THE ARAB COUNTRIES. IN MANY AREAS THE GOVERNMENT'S POLICIES ARE UNDER ATTACK, E.G., MEMBERSHIP IN THE EUROPEAN COMMUNITY, TO WHICH PUBLIC OPINION CONTINUES HOSTILE. THE GOVERNMENT IS SO ABSORBED IN COPING WITH THE COUNTRY'S ECONOMIC PROBLEMS THAT IT IS FORCED TO CONCENTRATE MOST OF ITS ENERGIES AND TIME ON INTERNAL AFFAIRS IN AN EFFORT TO GET CONTROL OF THE ECONOMIC SITUATION BEFORE THE NEXT GENERAL ELECTION WHICH WILL PROBABLY COME IN THE NEXT 18 MONTHS. THE GOVERNMENT HAS ANNOUNCED ITS INTENTION TO CUT PUBLIC, INCLUDING DEFENSE, SPENDING IN AN EFFORT TO STIMULATE GROWTH--ON WHICH IT COUNTS HEAVILY TO BRING INFLATION UNDER CONTROL. IN THESE CIRCUMSTANCES THE GOVERNMENT IS HYPERSENSITIVE ABOUT UNDERTAKING ADDITIONAL FINANCIAL BURDENS IN DEFENSE MATTERS LEST IT LAY ITSELF OPEN TO OPPOSITION CHARGES OF NEGLECTING DOMESTIC PRIORITIES.

4. THE OUTLOOK THEREFORE IS BLEAK FOR ANY MEANINGFUL BRITISH CONTRIBUTION TO BURDENSARING BEYOND POSSIBLY SOME SORT OF BROADENED INFRASTRUCTURE PROGRAM WHICH MIGHT AFFORD THE UNITED STATES SOME RELIEF WITHOUT MAKING

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SIGNIFICANT ADDITIONAL DEMANDS ON HMG. (EVEN HERE MOD OFFICIALS HAVE RECENTLY POINTED OUT TO US THAT THEY PAY MUCH MORE THAN THEIR SHARE OF THE COMMON INFRASTRUCTURE PROGRAM AS BRITAIN'S GNP HAS NOT GROWN AS FAST AS THOSE OF ITS NATO PARTNERS.)

AS AMBASSADOR RUMSFELD NOTES, THE BRITISH HAVE DECIDED TO FOREGO PRESSING THEIR OWN CASE FOR BALANCE OF PAYMENTS RELIEF AT THIS TIME OUT OF DEFERENCE TO THE EXIGENT SITUATION OF THE UNITED STATES; THEY THINK THAT THIS DECISION REPRESENTS A POSITIVE ALBEIT MODEST CONTRIBUTION TO THE US BURDENSARING INITIATIVE. THERE IS NO EVIDENCE THAT THEY THINK THAT THEY CAN DO MORE THAN THAT.

5. OUR CONVERSATIONS WITH GOVERNMENT MINISTERS AND OFFICIALS INDICATE THAT THE BRITISH CONVICTION THAT THEY ARE UNABLE TO CONTRIBUTE TO MULTILATERAL BURDEN-SHARING IS FIRM. DIPLOMATIC APPROACHES, EVEN AT A HIGH LEVEL, ARE THEREFORE UNLIKELY TO HAVE ANY SIGNIFICANT EFFECT ON BRITISH ATTITUDES. GIVEN THE IMPERATIVES OF THE BRITISH ECONOMIC SITUATION AND THE POLITICAL CLIMATE IN THE UK TODAY, IT IS MY BELIEF THAT ONLY AN APPROACH BY THE UNITED STATES AT THE

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HIGHEST POLITICAL LEVEL OFFERS ANY PROSPECT OF INDUCING THE BRITISH GOVERNMENT TO RE-EXAMINE ITS POSITION ON BURDENSARING. ANNENBERG

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